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SUBJECT: NORWAY FAVORS BINDING FRAMEWORK ON MERCURY ISSUE.

REF: STATE 63943

¶1. (U) Responding to reftel on June 18, Ministry of Environment Pollution Control Section senior advisor, Henrik Eriksen, discussed the GON position concerning mercury contamination. The GON favors a legally binding framework on global mercury contamination. All UNEP priority areas should be covered in the framework. The GON has not developed specific positions on required measures.

Binding Framework -----

¶2. (U) Eriksen stressed that the GON strongly favors a legal framework as the best solution to address mercury contamination. A voluntary framework is unlikely to include sufficiently binding measures to secure a level playing field. Further, he noted that a binding framework is needed to appropriately address trade implications and securing the sustainable financing of mercury reductions in developing countries. Nonetheless, the GON is amenable to conceptually discussing a non-binding framework in October. A clear GON position on a preferred type of legal framework has not yet been developed.

UNEP Priority Areas -----

¶3. (U) Eriksen stated that all of the UNEP priority areas should be covered in the framework. A debate specifying priority areas further, however, should wait. The GON will look to cooperative solution under the Basel Convention framework. Such cooperation will be similar to what has been done with POPs in the Stockholm Convention.

Broad Measures and Timing -----

¶4. (SBU) It is the GON's position that an agreement will require a broad range of measures in order to address different aspects of mercury pollution. He specifically mentioned direct phase-out goals, BAT requirements, information sharing and measures to promote technical assistance to developing countries. The Ministry has not yet developed specific positions on what types of measures any agreement should specify.

¶5. (SBU) A particular time-frame was not discussed. Eriksen stated that pace of action under any framework must be balanced against the availability and costs of mercury-free technology and how technical assistance could be provided to developing countries.

WHITNEY